

JULY 6, 1978

Last year I changed doctors. The fellow I was seeing was from out of the country. He understood about every sixth word of my Texas drawl. It was so bad I was afraid that I might be rushed into his office bleeding internally and end up having both big toes amputated and a couple of swallow forks added to my ears.

I had had that trouble before. One time up in New York I ordered a couple of poached eggs and had to eat a pastrami sandwich for breakfast. In other places the language has been so corrupted that the purist from Texas sure has a rough time talking to the primitives.

So I started going to another guy that was from closer to the Shortgrass Country. He was able to understand my miseries but he knew about as much about the limits of the middle-age male body as the director of the Metropolitan Museum of Arts knows about reviving the Penn Central Railroad.

I didn't check to see if he was one of those jogging and dieting nuts who wants to turn people's lives into a pool of yogurt and a private track meet. I figured from the looks of the folks sitting around the waiting room that he was fattening a bunch of hombres on jelly rolls to sell them by the pound to the packers.

I'd already requested a box in our new post office building down at the far end of the row to assure that I'd have to do some exercise. It hadn't been too long since I'd walked from the ranch house down to the barn.

A long time ago I caught on to the doctors' cheap trick of using preventive medicine. Anybody can keep an old boy healthy that lives like Tarzan and eats like a bridesmaid preparing to slip into a tight dress. What I was looking for was a healer that could cure bad lungs and clogged veins. If I wanted to live like some idiot tennis player or an ice skating fool, I'd have been going to one of those wrestling and rubbing doctors who are called chiropractors.

He had another slick angle, too. When it came time for the stress test, he flat out asked me if I wanted to take mine out at the geriatrics hospital. He said some old lady out there had set a pretty hot record on the treadmill. I guess he thought maybe I ought try to tie her after a practice heat.

I'm not wasting any more money or time on health nuts. One of these days science will wait messing around with white rats and start studying the human body. I belong to a cow fraternity that provides plenty of stress tests. Old women who can run as fast as he claimed, ought to be home keeping their grandkids instead of racing around a hospital.